

Phase II and Phase III Project Cover Sheet

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REPORT INFORMATION:

1984 Winter Frye, S. E.
Archeological Excavations at the Antietam Iron Furnace Complex (18WA288), Washington County, Maryland.
Submitted to the Bowman Board of Washington County and the Washington County Board of Commissioners

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Research Firm/Institution:

MHT and Frostburg State College
Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Sites examined:

18WA288

NRHP Listed: ☒

Project Details:

Phase I	Project Justification:
Phase II	The furnace site was first discovered accidentally by members of the Mt. Aetna Volunteer Fire Department in 1976, during construction of an addition to their fire hall. While archeological inquiry could not be undertaken at the time of that construction, a few years later when the fire department began planning the construction of a shooting range at the site, they sought assistance from the Maryland Historical Trust. MHT investigated the site with an exploratory trench and found that it was historically significant. Data recovery excavation was subsequently undertaken in the vicinity of the property to be impacted by the proposed shooting range.
Phase III	

MAC Accession: 1991.025

Project Objectives:
Goals and objectives were altered as the project moved forward through multiple field seasons.
Spring/Summer 1982 -Expose, map and analyze the base of the furnace stack and the intact areas of the site that were revealed by the MHT exploratory trench and threatened by construction of the shooting range. -Survey the area surrounding the furnace complex to locate associated features and map these features for future interpretation and preservation. -Correlate this information with data gathered from oral histories and historical research. -Use this information in assisting the Mt. Aetna VFD in locating the firing range, in preserving as much of the site as possible, in possibly creating an outdoor interpretive exhibit, and in developing a National Register nomination.
Fall 1982 -Excavate the central core of the site between the furnace stack and the wheelpit, where support structures are to be expected. Excavation of this area will provide more detailed interpretation of site function and perhaps greater precision in dating the site. -Tentative proposals had been made to the county regarding the possibility of creating a small interpretive and recreational park at the site. Completed excavations at 18WA288 would allow better assessment of its potential as a park and open the site for development.
Fall 1983 -To determine the extent of cultural deposits remaining beneath the excavations conducted in 1982. -To produce a site map and scale drawings of the furnace, retaining walls, and other features, as these measured drawings had not been completed in 1982. -To excavate the "control block"...an unexcavated, free-standing 2X2 m unit along the retaining wall that had severely eroded. -To prepare the site for backfilling, and thus protect it from further erosion.

Research Potential:

In the midst of excavation activities, the Antietam Iron Furnace Complex (18WA288) was successfully nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. Without doubt the Antietam Furnace represents the earliest blast furnace constructed in Washington County, and perhaps in Western Maryland as a whole. The short duration of operations, together with the sealed nature of the furnace site, afforded an excellent opportunity to examine eighteenth century iron-smelting technology and its products. However, the research potential of the Antietam Furnace has by no means been exhausted. Hopefully the site will one day constitute an educational and recreational park for the people of Western Maryland and other interested visitors.

